



Updated: 5/27/15

## **THE HISTORIC HOMEOWNER GRANT PROGRAM**

A District of Columbia government program to financially assist homeowners with the preservation of their historic residence

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

What is the Historic Homeowners Grant Program?...The program is a financial aid to help qualified homeowners pay for repairs that restore or rehabilitate their historic house.

Who is eligible for the grant?...Owners of owner-occupied residential properties in one of the twelve targeted historic districts (Anacostia, Blagden Alley, Capitol Hill, Fourteenth Street, U Street, LeDroit Park, Mount Pleasant, Mount Vernon Square, Mount Vernon Triangle, Shaw, Strivers' Section, and Takoma Park). The house must contribute to the historic character of a district by virtue of its age and characteristics. For example, a house built in 1980 would not qualify because it is not old enough to contribute to the character of a historic district. If you are unsure if your property contributes to a historic district, please contact HPO. Condominiums and co-operatives are not eligible.

What can the grant be used for?...The grant may be used for repair, restoration or replacement of exterior features, such as walls and siding, windows, doors, roofs, cornices, porches, and front steps. While any exterior work may be proposed, preference will be given for work that is visible from public streets, makes a significant difference in the appearance of the house, and which retains original historic features and materials. Work can include the restoration of missing historic building elements, such as a porch that was once on a house but is now no longer there, restoration or replacement of windows and doors, removal of non-original siding, painting, etc. The grant can also be used to make significant structural repairs, such as rebuilding a collapsed floor or repairing a failed foundation.

What can't the grant be used for?...Heating, air conditioning, plumbing, insulation, solar panels, new additions, and stable cracks due to normal settling, etc. are not eligible under this program. If you are unsure whether work would be eligible, you may discuss it with the HPO staff or submit a Part I application for a determination.

How much are the grants?...The maximum grant allowable is \$25,000 per household, except in Anacostia where the maximum grant is \$35,000. A household may have only one application under consideration at any one time.

What is the Homestead Deduction requirement?...A grantee must be receiving a Homestead Deduction for property taxes in the District of Columbia at the time the grant is issued. Homestead Deductions are only available to people who own and occupy a primary residence in the District. This means that if you rent your residence, or live outside the District, you are not eligible for this grant. Please note the following example is allowable: You receive the Homestead Deduction on your current residence, you use the grant on a second house you own or just purchased, within 60 days of completion of the restoration, you move in and transfer the Homestead Deduction to your new home.

Is there an income limit for grant recipients?...Yes. Grants may only be awarded to low- and moderate-income households, as defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The number of people in the household and the total Gross Income earned in the most recently completed tax year from all sources (salary,



rental income, business income, alimony, Social Security, pensions, etc.) are taken into account. For example, a household of four that earned \$125,000 in 2014 would be eligible, but ineligible if annual income was \$130,000. By comparison, a household of one who earned \$89,000 would be eligible, but ineligible if \$91,000. A table of eligible incomes can be accessed at the [Historic Homeowners Grant Webpage](#). Ownership and income verification will be conducted by the DC Office of Tax and Revenue.

Are homeowners required to contribute some of their own money to a preservation project?... Only some homeowners will need to contribute a portion of their own money. This contribution is called a *match*. Based on their household size and income, applicants will fall into one of three categories. Homeowners in the first category will not need to provide a match. Owners in the middle category must pay 25% (15% in Anacostia) of project costs. Owners in the third category must pay 50% (40% in Anacostia) of project costs.

Is the grant taxable as income?...No. The Internal Revenue Service has officially notified the Office of Planning that the grants--under the General Welfare Exclusion doctrine--are not taxable as income. Locally, the enabling law for the grant has been amended to make the grants not taxable for the purposes of DC income.

Can the grant go towards projects already started or finished?...No. The grant is not retroactive. Work that has already started or completed is not eligible.

What is the application process?...There are two parts to the application. Part I is very short and will help homeowners determine quickly if they are eligible for the grant. Applicants should provide a few photographs of the property and describe what they would like to use the grant for. HPO staff will provide written comments to the homeowner about the strengths and weaknesses of their application, along with specific requirements necessary to make the project compatible with the historic district. The homeowner will use these comments to prepare the Part II application.

What will be required in the Part II application?... The Part II application is more substantial and will require more work by the homeowner. The biggest task in Part II will be securing bids from contractors which will establish the price of the preservation work and value of the grant. Homeowners must provide three itemized bids from contractors.

How will grants be awarded?...A selection committee of DC officials and private historic preservation experts appointed by the Director of the Office of Planning and Chairman of the Historic Preservation Review Board will review all Part II applications. The criteria used by the committee shall include, in part, urgency of preservation needs of the property, importance of property to the historic district, consistency with preservation standards and guidelines, impact of the project on the historic district, relevance to DC planning goals and priorities, and equitable geographic distribution.

Are there any obligations for the homeowner to receive the grant?...Yes, the homeowner will enter into a covenant with the District of Columbia that requires that anything built with the grant remain in place and in good repair for at least 5 years. If an owner reverses or removes a project, the District of Columbia can take back the grant money by placing a lien on the property. This obligation and covenant moves with the property if it is sold. Any new owner would be subject to the covenant.

How long will the application process take?...The application, review, and certification process – from the Part 1 deadline to start of construction – will take approximately 6-8 months. This timeline should be kept in mind when planning your project and obtaining bids from contractors.

How do I obtain further information?....Call HPO at 202-442-8818 or email [Brendan.meyer@dc.gov](mailto:Brendan.meyer@dc.gov)